

[002]            This application is a national stage completion of PCT/AU2003/001626 filed December 9, 2003 which claims priority from Australian Application Serial No. 2002953185 filed December 9, 2002.

1-14. (CANCELED)

15. (NEW) A surgical warming blanket arranged for use during surgery on a patient and comprising at least two layers capable of forming a hollow air space between the two layers for receiving warmed air from a heating unit, the two layers and air space being arranged in operation to form a substantially tubular arrangement at least partially surrounding a patient receiving space, whereby when warm air is passed into the air space the warm air is delivered to the patient receiving space via the blanket, to maintain warm air within the patient receiving space, the patient receiving space receiving the patient's body and allowing access to the patient's body for surgery without disturbing the blanket.

16. (NEW) The surgical warming blanket in accordance with claim 15, wherein the tubular arrangement surrounds the patient receiving space on three sides.

17. (NEW) The surgical warming blanket in accordance with claim 15, wherein one of the two layers of the blanket has a portion of its surface formed of pervious material so that the warmed air is delivered to the patient receiving space via the pervious material.

18. (NEW) The surgical warming blanket in accordance with claim 15, wherein the surface of the blanket is arranged to be fluid repellent, so that liquid contamination is repelled by the surface of the blanket.

19. (NEW) The surgical warming blanket in according to claim 15, wherein the surgical warming blanket is sized and shaped so that the patient receiving space is arranged to receive an animal.

20. (NEW) The surgical warming blanket in accordance with claim 19, wherein the surgical warming blanket is shaped and sized so that the patient receiving space is arranged to receive a large animal, such as a large dog.

21. (NEW) The surgical warming blanket in accordance with claim 15, the surgical warming blanket is sized and shaped so that the patient receiving space can receive a human adult.

22. (NEW) A heating unit for a patient warming system, the heating unit including a delivery port for delivering warmed air to a patient warming blanket, and a feedback means for determining whether a patient warming blanket is attached and responsive to a determination that the patient warming blanket is not attached, to disable delivery of warmed air via the port.

23. (NEW) The heating unit in accordance with claim 22, wherein the feedback means includes a pressure sensor for sensing back pressure on the air delivery port.

24. (NEW) The heating unit in accordance with claim 22, the heating unit being arranged to heat the air to a range of temperatures.

25. (NEW) The heating unit in accordance with claim 24, being arranged to heat air up to 46°C.

26. (NEW) The heating unit in accordance with claim 22, wherein in combination with the surgical warming blanket arranged for use during surgery on a patient, the blanket having at least two layers capable of forming a hollow air space between the two layers for receiving warmed air from the heating unit, the two layers and air space being arranged in operation to form a substantially tubular arrangement at least partially surrounding a patient receiving space, whereby when the warm air is passed into the air space the warm air is delivered to the patient receiving space via the blanket, to maintain warm air within the patient receiving space, the patient receiving space receiving the patient's body and allowing access to the patient's body for surgery without disturbing the blanket.

27. (NEW) A method of warming a patient during surgery, comprising the steps of receiving the patient within a patient receiving space within which the patient's body is accessible for surgery, and passing warmed air into a patient receiving space to keep the patient warm.

28. (NEW) The method in accordance with claim 27, further comprising the step of utilizing a surgical warming blanket arranged for use during surgery on a patient, the warming blanket comprising at least two layers capable of forming a hollow air space between them for receiving warmed air from a heating unit, the two layers and air space being arranged in operation to form a substantially tubular arrangement at least partially surrounding a patient receiving space, whereby when warm air is passed into the air space the warm air is delivered to the patient receiving space via the blanket, to maintain warm air within the patient receiving space, the patient receiving space receiving the patients body and allowing access to the patients body for surgery without disturbing the blanket to form the patient receiving space and deliver the warmed air thereto.